

Changing Lives

BAPTIST WOMEN, BENEVOLENCE, AND COMMUNITY
ON THE CROW RESERVATION, 1904-60



BY BECKY MATTHEWS



In the early 1900s, the Crow people were adapting to reservation life, including the federal educational mandates that often meant Indian children attended faraway boarding schools. To keep their children at home, Lodge Grass-area tribal leaders invited the American Baptist Home Missionary Society (ABHMS) to start a day school at Lodge Grass. Below, tribal members attend the dedication of the school built in 1904 as a result of their request. Writing on the edge of the original lantern slide reads: "Indians were camped in huge semi-circle around mission. About 170 [in number]."



“There is no place too lowly or dark for our feet to enter and no place so high and bright but it needs the touch of the light that we carry from the cross; no man, woman, or child is so far sunken in sin that our hands cannot reach him or her, while God holds us up. We are the highway and hedge workers, who are also able to expound the Scriptures. We can help a tired mother cut out a garment for her child, and meanwhile teach both mother and child the Gospel. We not only pray for the sick, but we also cook them a tempting morsel of food. We are equally at home in parlor or kitchen. ‘Our shoes are iron and brass,’ there is no road too hard for us to travel. We live among the people, and mingle freely with them, so that we may be a present help in time of trouble. We have never learned how to stand on a pedestal and hand out the Gospel at the end of a forty-foot pole.”

With these words, Joanna P. Moore, who in the 1870s became the first missionary to be financed by the newly formed Women’s Home Mission Society of Chicago, described herself and other Baptist women serving home missions.¹

Grounded in openness, Moore’s message combines faith with domestic practicalities and underscores that although Baptist women’s home missions ministered with energy to all, their primary focus was women and children. In essence, this was the reason Baptist women created the organizations that sent women into the field, and it was a motivating factor for the women who went on such missions. The opportunity to minister to women and children certainly loomed large in the minds of the Baptist women who began to work on the Crow Indian Reservation in eastern Montana in 1904. They and their successors contributed greatly to the education of Crow children, to the persistence of Baptist influence on the reservation, and to a reinvigorated sense of community among people fragmented by internal and external pressures related to adaptation to reservation life.

The history of these Baptist women speaks volumes about understandings of womanhood and the dynamics of intercultural relationships. The women



Joanna P. Moore,
In Christ’s Stead: Autobiographical Sketches (Chicago, 1902), 19

Most of the women who taught at the Lodge Grass Baptist school came from the service tradition of the Women’s Home Mission Society, which centered its work on benevolence and the welfare of women and children. The first missionary financed by the society, Joanna P. Moore (left, 1867), characterized Baptist missionary women as “the highway and hedge workers.”

who served on the Crow reservation—indeed, all who were involved in home missions—embodied what historian Lori Ginzberg has called an “ideology of benevolence,” which derived from the assumption that because women were more fragile and virtuous than men, they belonged at home, confined to a “domestic sphere” and protected from the grime and greed of industrial growth and political machinations. Moreover, because of their moral superiority, women were duty-bound to uplift others. Widespread by the 1830s, the belief that linked domesticity and benevolence manifested in many ways, but white, Protestant, upper- and middle-class women were its principal adherents. By “extending the job of motherhood,” such women constructed class- and gender-specific

identities for themselves while simultaneously effecting changes in the meaning and function of benevolence.²

As the story of Baptist women on the Crow reservation reveals, changes in interpretation of benevolence and domesticity empowered women who were active in the home mission movement. Their truths about gender in American society came to differ from those of their mothers and grandmothers. They embraced independence and deployed power differently. Before their appointments, they received professional training in a school managed by women under the authority of an autonomous women's group in which women assumed leadership roles at all organizational levels, raising and managing substantial sums of money in the process. Still, these mission-minded women insisted that their clients accept older, fading definitions of womanhood, and thus they linked the advancement of Christianity and the "survival of civilization" to domestic ideals. As missionaries, they acquired new skills and explored new opportunities, using the work of benevolence to create independent identities. And this created a great irony. The home mission women needed the people they served. Benevolence without clients is impossible.

Another point, however, is vitally important: clients are subjects as well as objects. They are the ones who decide to accept, reject, or modify benevolent agendas. It is within this fluid situation that intercultural relationships emerge. This is what happened in Crow country. The work of the Baptist women on the reservation changed lives—their own and those of the Crow people they encountered.³



The Baptist mission to the Crows grew from a home mission movement that began in New England more than a century earlier. In 1800, fourteen women, some Baptists and some Congregationalists, organized the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes. Their initial efforts centered on raising funds to "send the glad tidings of salvation" to the "gospel-destitute frontier settlements" of Vermont and western Pennsylvania. To that end, they helped establish Female Mite and Cent societies across Massachusetts. The funds these societies collected helped to support ministers and to send supplies to

those in need. In time, the idea spread to other states, so that by the 1820s, Baptist women's groups were assisting churches and schools in numerous frontier communities and among a variety of Indian peoples east of the Mississippi.⁴

Initially, women's organizations were localized and virtually invisible prayer and fund-raising groups dedicated to promoting piety through "moral suasion," but over time their goals and organizational structures changed. The Civil War led to increased concern for efficiency and centralization in women's charity work, and this emphasis expanded during the Gilded Age with the formation of national organizations based on contemporaneous ideas of professionalism and scientific management. Hence, in 1877, Baptist women decided to consolidate state and regional groups into two major societies.

Geographical realities influenced this development. The first meeting of the Women's Home Mission Society (WHMS), held February 1, 1877, in Chicago's Michigan Avenue Baptist Church, united a large number of midwestern organizations. The WHMS defined itself as "a distinct department of home mission work never before undertaken by the denomination, and appealing especially to women viz: A work by women in homes for the elevation and Christianization of the families of degraded populations in our country—a work which, if secondary to the preaching of the Gospel, is almost as vital to its complete success."⁵ Nine months later, at Tremont Temple in Boston, New England women organized the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS), stating as their purpose "the evangelization of the women among the Freed people, the Indians, the heathen immigrants, and the new settlements of the West." This organization came to have considerable influence in the Northeast.⁶

Although each society was autonomous, they devised methods for mutual cooperation and developed similar operational patterns. Working missionaries received appointments, support, and guidance from an administrative structure similar to that of business corporations. An elected board, responsible for policy decisions, selected and supervised officers who implemented those policies and managed finances. At the grassroots level, women in local churches supported the board's work with money, prayers, programs of support, material donations,

the selection of representatives to state and national boards, and the recruitment of and personal assistance to women “on the field.”⁷

Within this framework, while consistently guarding their independence (a Baptist tradition), the women’s societies cooperated with the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS), a predominantly male organization that was founded in New York in 1832 as a “single fraternity for the accomplishment of a single exalted purpose, the Christianization of the west.”⁸ To achieve its goal, the ABHMS trained and commissioned ministers to establish and maintain churches in places where it perceived a need. In this sense, the organization’s evangelical strategies differed from those practiced by women.

Other differences also became apparent. As early as 1879, acknowledging that the bulk of its money came from church women and fully aware that losing it would be “calamitous,” ABHMS leaders resolved that it “must do nothing which will alienate the sisterhood of our churches. It would be suicidal to turn coldly from women who came to it with the proffer of their cooperation and support.” The board’s goal was to strengthen its power through a union with the women’s societies. It attempted to do so a number of times over the years, but for decades the Baptist women’s mission societies declined all consolidation proposals.⁹

As the women’s societies matured, professional preparation for the “highway and hedge workers” became an issue. At the Baptists’ annual national convention in Indianapolis in 1881, Mrs. Carlos Swift, secretary of the Chicago society, described the problem: because of “requests for missionaries from New Mexico, Utah and Indian Territory; also from the Freed People, Scandinavians, Germans, and French,” many young women were volunteering to serve and needed to be trained. “This work,” Swift observed, “is too holy and responsible to be committed to novices.” Accordingly, the convention voted to support Women’s Home Mission Society efforts to establish the Baptist Missionary Training School, which opened its doors in a rented house at 2338 Michigan Avenue to eighteen students in September 1881.¹⁰

Fourteen of the eighteen students, including Joanna Moore, already had experience in home mission work, but they wanted to become better

equipped. Students paid four dollars weekly for room and board and ten dollars in tuition to cover necessary supplies. The WBHMS, which paid fifty dollars per month for the building, claimed some of the space for its offices.¹¹

Although the school’s beginnings were modest, its goals were lofty. Devotion to God through service to others was the undergirding principal. Thus, the development of skills for service became the purpose of its programs. Mary Burdette, the institution’s first president, described the standards for the ideal missionary:

She must know how to cook, to clean, to keep a house with neatness and economy, and to teach the art to others; to sew, to mend, to show the best way of doing things; to visit, to be able to minister to, and prescribe for the sick, to comfort the afflicted, soothe the dying, to feed the hungry, clothe the ragged; to prepare work, to organize and sustain industrial schools, Sunday schools, mothers’ meetings, temperance societies, to teach manners and morals; to profess sanctified tact, self-control, and the spirit of the Master; to pray, to sing, to teach (even pastors); and in the pursuance of their work to walk miles, if need be; to fast if it may be; “to run and not to weary, to walk and not faint.”¹²

Originally, students were to acquire all of these attributes in a three-month course of study. In less than two years, however, officials initiated a one-year requirement, and by 1891 a two-year program was in place, conducted in a building purchased that year by the Women’s Home Mission Society. The curriculum combined religious education—including classes in church history, Christian doctrine, and church government and organization—with practical instruction in hygiene, cooking, homemaking, and teaching kindergarten. Students gained field experience by working among Chicago’s large immigrant population.¹³

As its training school grew, the Chicago society expanded its horizons. Graduates served tribal communities, including the Apaches, Arapahos, Cheyennes, Cherokees, Kiowas, Hopis, and Comanches, and went into the Deep South to work with African Americans. In response to ever-increasing immigration numbers, the Society sent workers to the cities

of the industrial heartland, to Chinese enclaves in San Francisco, to populations of Japanese in Seattle, and to Castle (later Ellis) Island in New York. And, of course, there were burgeoning needs in the Chicago area. Female missionaries also served in areas of Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.¹⁴

Through the years, the Baptist Missionary Training School, or the BMTS (as students affectionately called it), came to incorporate the changing aspirations of Baptist women associated with home missions. From the outset, women's organizations always controlled all levels of the school's operation, but men, including American Baptist Home Mission Society members, supported its work. In fact, the school's instructors in theology were Chicago ministers. Additionally, despite the fact that the original purpose of the school was to prepare Baptist women for home mission service, in time its directors decided to accept applicants from other Protestant denominations and from women interested in foreign as well as home missions. But graduation from BMTS was a prerequisite for all Women's Society appointees.¹⁵ Thus, with the exception of ministers' wives, all of the Baptist women assigned to the Crow reservation were training school graduates, and as mandated by the Society, all were single.

Finding Common Ground on the Jesus Road

In the early twentieth century, Baptist women strongly influenced the efforts of Crow people in creating a reservation culture. This process began with the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, which allocated a total of 8 million acres to the Crows. Within a few decades, the tribe's land base had been cut to its present size of 2 million acres. In their adaptation to reservation life between the 1880s and the turn of the twentieth century, the Crow people faced daunting issues, including the education of their children. In accordance with its assimilationist policies, the federal government placed Indian children in boarding schools to remove them from the influences of family and culture. Doggedly opposed to this practice, Crow leaders in the Lodge Grass area developed a shrewd strategy: in 1902, the Crows *invited* Baptist missionaries to establish a day school in their village.

The Crows' first step in acquiring a day school was to send a delegation to Sheridan, Wyoming, to

seek advice from William A. Petzoldt, pastor of the First Baptist Church there. Petzoldt, who had first met Crow people while on a sightseeing trip to the Bighorn Mountains in 1901, agreed to help them draft an appeal for a school (not a church) to the American Baptist Home Mission Society. In an article for that organization's magazine, Field Secretary E. E. Chivers reported how "thirty chiefs and leading men touched the pen over against their names" on a petition requesting a teacher and school at Lodge Grass. In response, in June 1903, the ABHMS sent a contingent of six men, led by Chivers and accompanied by a female stenographer, to Lodge Grass to discuss the Crows' request. According to Chivers's report,

A council was held. At the appointed hour Medicine Crow, the chief of the tribe, with White Arm, Wolf Lies Down, Grey Bull, Shows the Fish, Scolds the Bear, Old Bear, One Goose, One Star, Bull Goes Hunting and other braves came together with braided hair and painted face and eagle feathers, arrayed in buckskin coats trimmed with ermine and bead-work and elks' teeth and other ornaments and seated themselves in a semi-circle on the grass. Opposite them, in common garb, were younger men of the tribe, while a few squaws gathered outside the circle at a respectful distance.¹⁶

In true council fashion, each Crow leader, dressed in his finest for such an auspicious occasion and to impress the guests, spoke at length. Their cause was clear; they wanted their children at home. Negotiations extended over a three-day period, in part because the Baptists remained firm on one point: they would build a school only if the Crows allowed them to establish a church. The Crow delegation initially rejected this proposal since some Crow leaders feared that a missionary would interfere with, as Chivers put it, "their games and dances." Finally, however, with Crow acquiescence and the approval of the reservation superintendent, the Baptist delegation agreed to recommend that its board send a "missionary [minister] and wife with a consecrated young woman as a teacher."¹⁷

At the time of their 1903 conference with the Crows, Baptists were relative latecomers to reservation evangelism. In the late nineteenth century, Methodists, Catholics, Unitarians, and Congregationalists

In June 1903, E. E. Chivers, the field secretary of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society, met with a council of Lodge Grass leaders and conveyed the society's offer to build a day school there if the Crows would also allow a Baptist church to be established. The Crow delegation initially rejected the proposal, anticipating interference with their traditional religious practices, but finally acquiesced. The Baptists then promised to send a "missionary [minister] and wife with a consecrated young woman as a teacher." Chivers is pictured (center) at the council with Wolf Lies Down (left) and Grey Bull (right).



William H. Rau, photographer, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.; Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, LS:95.103

had sent missionaries to the reservation. These had met with varying degrees of success. Only the Catholic Church—with missions first at St. Xavier and later at Pryor, Lodge Grass, and Wyola—became a long-lasting presence, albeit one that was quite different from that of the Baptists. A significant reason for this difference is the extraordinary roles Baptist women played in developing individual and community connections with Crow people.¹⁸

In their initial interactions with the Baptists, Crow people had a well-defined purpose: a school that would allow children to remain with their families. The evangelists, on the other hand, had a different objective: a church that would become a center for spreading Christianity. Through compromise, both groups attained their goals, but they also acquired much more. Crow men and women in relationships with the missionaries together developed a new kind of community. Many Crows understood that the semi-nomadic culture they had enjoyed during the buffalo days was no longer possible. They needed to construct a replacement, and they decided that Baptist missionaries would be part of that building process.¹⁹

Over the next five years, this process solidified as Baptist missionaries and teachers arrived on the reservation. In September 1903, the ABHMS approved the proposed plan, and in December, William Petzoldt, who had volunteered to leave his pastorate in Sheridan, arrived in Lodge Grass. His wife, Anna, and their two children, Cedric and Genevieve, followed a few weeks later. The Baptist teacher arrived in 1904, after construction of the school. Also, the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs sent a field matron in

1904 to promulgate domesticity among the Crows. She worked closely with the missionaries and even lived in their homes.²⁰

The Baptists arrived in a community that was already in transition. According to the 1900 census, the Crow population totaled 1,875. This number included 1,297 adults over age eighteen and 578 youngsters eighteen or younger. Eighty-two percent of the adults spoke “Crow, No English” (no statistics are given for the children), while 217 spoke some English.²¹ In 1903, according to Chivers, who undoubtedly received his information from agent S. G. Reynolds, 250 Crow families were farming allotted land; 260 families lived in “dwelling houses”; and more than 600 individuals had “adopted citizens’ dress.” Approximately 500 people lived “within reach” of Lodge Grass. The field secretary described these circumstances as “encouraging” in terms of the progress of civilization, but he still saw a “needy field.”²²

Upon his arrival at Lodge Grass in 1903, Petzoldt identified the mission’s greatest need as a place to build a church and a parsonage. White Arm, who had been among the earliest petitioners, offered his allotment of 160 acres, which was in a prime Lodge Grass location. Moreover, he and his family moved from their log home into a tipi so that the Petzoldts would

have a place to live until their home was completed. Then, in late December, he and his wife, Pretty Shell, along with other Crow men and women, traveled to the nearby Wolf Mountains and spent five weeks in winter weather cutting timber for the construction of the church and parsonage. A woman named Pretty Enemy gained recognition as the champion log-cutter, and each night, at the request of the Crows, Petzoldt gave “Jesus talks.”²³

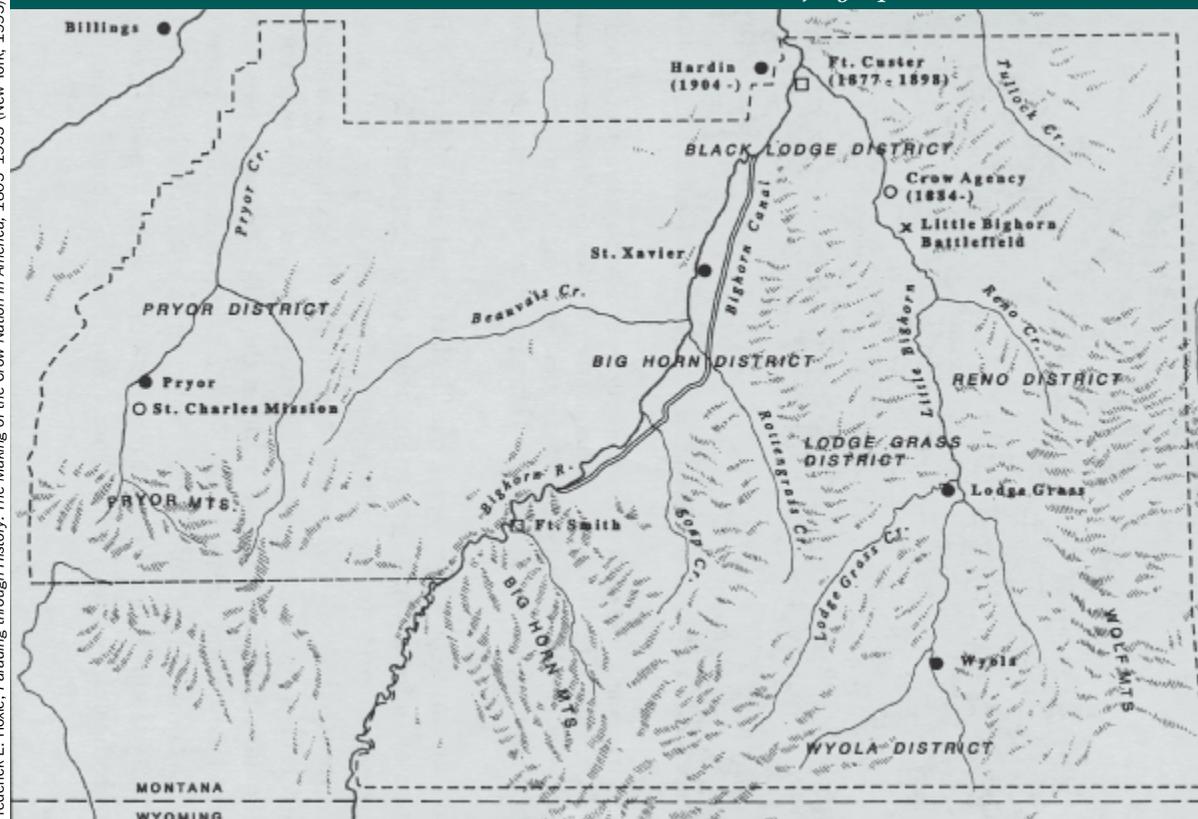
Before their late December journey to the Wolf Mountains, the Crow people joined the Petzoldts in celebrating Christmas. For that occasion, the Crows staged a dance in which participants “circled a Christmas tree” and “portrayed the old times in all the vivid colors,” abandoning “every vestige of the white man’s ‘habitat.’” A gift-giving ceremony (a “giveaway” in today’s terminology), whose main purpose was (and is) to honor those for whom one has special affection or appreciation, followed the dance. Medicine Crow brought a dance rattle that was to be sent to Field Secretary Chivers; Shows A Fish sent Chivers a pair of moccasins. Petzoldt received beaded garments, and the Crows presented Anna Petzoldt with a “fine saddle pony.”²⁴ Through their gifts, the

Crows showed their respect for the missionaries. The missionaries, in turn, presented a program with a Christian message and then provided gifts solicited from local and national merchants for all attendees. Thus began a Christmas tradition of reciprocity that for decades incorporated meaningful elements of both cultures.

Another event in the winter of 1904, this time tragic, strengthened the bond between the Crows and the Petzoldts. Cedric Petzoldt, less than two years old, died of pneumonia. Crow people, who understood the loss of a child all too well, mourned the little boy, referring to him as the “Jesus Baby.” After his burial, they erected a marker inscribed with the words “In memory of Little Cedric by the Crow Indians.” Afterward, they began to bury their own children near Cedric’s grave.²⁵

By their compromises, the church-building work, the Christmas celebration and giveaway, and their shared grief, Crow people and Baptist newcomers began to establish significant intercultural connections. A few Crow people readily accepted the teachings of Christianity (White Arm and Pretty Shell were the first), many others waited a long time before

CROW INDIAN RESERVATION, 1904



Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (New York, 1995), 177

converting, and some never joined the Baptist flock. But the church became more than a church. It was at the center of the community, and community activities were for everyone.

The school opened in September 1904 with Belle Simmons, sponsored by the Boston WABHMS, in charge. Eighteen students quickly enrolled, but although Crow parents pleaded for others to be admitted, many were rejected because they lived too far away, were too old, had contagious diseases, or lived with grandparents, thereby violating the government policy that they must live in “their rightful homes.” In the end, twenty-nine students gained access to the school in its first year.²⁶

The federal government required the Baptists to follow all of its policies in the new school. Students had to wear uniforms, and the curriculum conformed to the rather rigid course of study mandated by the Office of Indian Affairs. With its specific requirements for each grade level, this system combined academic work (English, reading, mathematics, geography, hygiene) with a heavy emphasis on industrial education (agriculture, blacksmithing, and carpentry for boys; sewing, cooking, and housekeeping for girls).²⁷

The extent to which one woman could implement this plan in Lodge Grass is questionable. Early on, Simmons appeared greatly discouraged in her

work. According to the government-appointed field matron, Janette Woodruff, who arrived in September 1904, Simmons warned her:

Oh, you won't be able to stand it here, Mrs. Woodruff. It's as lonely as can be. Sometimes I find it almost intolerable. It's like shoveling sands on the seashore. It seems utterly futile to try to teach the children anything. I do not mean that they are unable to learn, but one never knows whether they understand or not. They're just different, that's all, and we stay far apart in spite of everything. Yes, these two races must forever go their separate ways as far as I can see.²⁸

The report of this conversation appears in Woodruff's memoirs, published twenty-five years after the fact. Although the quote is likely apocryphal, it seems safe to assume that it is an authentic representation of Simmons's attitude. She resigned at the end of her first term of service, leaving, as Woodruff puts it, “for the outer world where people were white and where life had variety.”²⁹

The next teacher was a Cherokee woman named Lucy Hicks, who had studied at Bacone College as well as the Baptist Training School. According to a minister who visited Lodge Grass, her work in

In September 1903, minister William A. Petzoldt, joined soon after by his wife, Anna, and their children, Cedric and Genevieve, arrived in Lodge Grass to establish the Baptist mission. The congregation (right) is attending the “1st Chivers Hall Church service. Women on one side, men on the other.”



Scott and Van Alena, photographers, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.; Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, LS.95.134



White Arm, seated here with his family, offered his 160-acre allotment near Lodge Grass for the church and school, even moving his family from their log home into a tipi so the Petzoldts would have a place to live until the parsonage could be built. White Arm and his wife, Pretty Shell, were among the first Crows to accept the teachings of Christianity. Others took a long time to convert, and some never did. Regardless, the church became a community center.

the school there was “a concrete illustration of the value of mission work among the Indians.” Hicks taught thirty-five students of varying ages and abilities. After seven months, she reported that there had been “advancement along the lines of school work and individual improvement. The older pupils have reached a point where they take a vital interest in their studies, an enthusiasm is manifest, and an effort to master them.” Boys were gaining industrial training by building poultry houses under the guidance of an unnamed supervisor. Anna Petzoldt assisted Hicks with the girls’ industrial classes. One day a week, the two women, with two older girls, visited Crow families and, in a echo of the link between benevolence and domesticity, taught women the “entire routine of household duties,” so that “dishes are washed, cupboards, shelves or boxes cleaned and spread with papers; floors swept and scrubbed; dinner prepared; windows washed, and stove polished.” Another weekday was for sewing and another for laundry. Mrs. Petzoldt also conducted a weekly “Mothers’ Meeting” and a “Jesus sewing circle” for adult women.³⁰

The Baptists never paid Anna Petzoldt for her services, but in accord with denominational expectations, she played a major role in the church’s endeavors. In a letter published by the ABHMS, Petzoldt wrote:

The missionary’s home became more than ever a sort of general supply station. Many were sick and

needed medical care; some came to borrow coffee pots, kettles, tubs, and wash boards; others wanted bread, potatoes, sugar, soap, flour, etc; young men came for magazines and reading matter; young women to visit and sew. These are daily and hourly occurrences; to add variety an old man wanted me to give him the roses from my summer hat and a woman asked what I would charge to wash her blankets. No drug clerk could be busier than we were in handing out salves, eye water, cough mixtures and other medicines. These things are not mentioned for any tone of hardship, for we rejoice in the opportunity to do them. Good health and Montana mountain air go hand in hand with plenty of work.³¹

“Plenty of work” might also describe Lucy Hicks’s life at Lodge Grass. In addition to teaching and joining Anna Petzoldt in community work, Hicks served as clerk of the church, which had adopted the name First Crow Indian Baptist Church. A 1907 report sent to the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society provides insight on developments at the mission:

One more year’s work for Jesus among the Crow Indians, a year crowded full of opportunities and sprinkled over with God’s rich blessings. Our little church has grown until there are five baptized believers and seven more awaiting Baptism. Of the



Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.;
Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, U.S. 95.117

The first Baptist missionary teacher on the Crow reservation, Belle Simmons, arrived in September 1904. She stayed for only one term and was replaced by Lucy Hicks (above, with her students), who adapted better than Simmons had to teaching and reservation life. Hicks reported after seven months that there had been “advancement along the lines of school work and individual improvement. The older pupils have reached a point where they take a vital interest in their studies.” She taught thirty-five students of varying ages.

latter, one is the government interpreter for the district, now led by the spirit of God to be interpreter for the Mission. Another of the converts was one of the bitterest enemies of the Mission in its early days. Church prayer meetings are held twice each week and are the most encouraging features of our work. Every member takes part in both testimony and prayer. One of our Jesus girls has a wonderful gift in prayer and testimony. She is the only one in her camp who is a Christian. Many gave money to be sent in as “Jesus money,” and this month \$51 was sent from this place to New York [ABHMS headquarters].³²

The Hicks report reveals an important point. Although growth in membership was slow, members had already become committed to mission ideals. This commitment soon led to increased Baptist influence in Crow country. At the request of Crow people in other reservation communities, Baptists established additional centers. In 1907, they opened a small mission at Pryor, which was “one hundred wagon road miles” from Lodge Grass. Petzoldt made regular visits, but “lay people” conducted services until 1912,

when the WABHMS sent Sarah Goodspeed as a missionary. She taught Sunday school classes, set up sewing circles, helped with health care, attended socials, and initiated a ministry for non-Indian people in the community. But the activity Goodspeed “loved most of all” was the weekly hour she spent “in the government school, teaching our boys and girls of God and of His Word.” In 1918, in response to the initiative of Crow parents, Baptists established a day school at Pryor. Crow people themselves constructed the school so that their children would not have to attend the federal boarding school at Pryor, an institution that enforced Indian Office regulations with such tenacity that students were allowed to spend a mere seven hours with their families at Christmas.³³

In 1911, two women (one a teacher, the other a matron) supported by the WABHMS accepted a call to Wyola, “a day’s ride by horse or wagon” south of Lodge Grass. The Home Mission board had financed a building, which functioned as a chapel, a school, and living quarters for the missionaries. In her first report to her sponsors, the teacher, Blanche Sim, expressed dismay at the “indifference” of the Wyola Crows. But the following year, she was more positive. Although

Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.; Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, LS.95.129



Although few surviving photographs feature Anna Petzoldt, as the minister's wife, she played a major role in the church's endeavors, providing assistance in many aspects of mission and community work, including helping Hicks with the girls' industrial classes and visiting Crow families to teach women the "entire routine of household duties" as well as specific skills such as sewing on a treadle sewing machine (below left) and gardening (left). The woman with the young Crow gardeners is Janette Woodruff, a government-appointed field matron who also assisted with the teaching of domestic skills.

Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.; Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, LS.95.133



Shaw, her successor at Wyola, acknowledged that she had experienced such a change. In 1916, she wrote, "The more I understand the Indian the more I enjoy my work, especially the teaching." Attendance at Wyola that year was "perfect except for sickness. We do so many things that are new and unusual for them that they will not stay at home." Shaw created adventurous lessons for her students. She took them for hikes along the river and taught them the English words for what they saw. For the study of geography, her charges imagined themselves

the school was small with only twelve students, attendance was excellent, her students were advancing in their work, and within the sparsely settled community of adults (only seventy lived nearby), there was "a strong feeling of good will among all toward the mission and what it stands for."³⁴

Possibly Sim changed her attitude because she became more comfortable in her work. Frances

in Africa as they explored their own familiar grasslands. And, she added:

They have taken the initiative in many other cases. One day we had been reading about the "Midnight Ride of Paul Revere." During the noon hour there was a dreadful noise outside and Miss Oden [the matron] and I hastened to the window to ascertain





Though church membership grew slowly, those who joined became committed to Baptist ideals. Here, a mixed group of Crow and non-Indian families gather around a “folding baby organ” during a “camp meeting on Lodge Grass Creek above [the] ‘narrows.’” Among the families noted are “Geo & Sarah Pease–Ed Schroeder family–Deputee family–Mr. & Mrs. Shows a Fish–White Arms–Dick Cummins & family, Petzoldts and guests, Mr. & Mrs. Jacobs, etc.”

the cause. We were just in time to see Allan Hunts the Arrow galloping down the lane on his horse, shouting at the top of his voice, “The British! The British!” and immediately the other children appeared here and there along the road and rushed after him with sticks and guns.³⁵

By appealing to her students’ love of horses and outdoor adventures, this teacher had made a personal connection with the children. Clearly, she relished her time with them.

Effie Hoover was another missionary who relished her life among the Crows. As a young woman, drawing on the strong work ethic and Christian commitment she had experienced in her large Illinois family, she set out to “do as much as a woman born in that era could, with limited means.” After acquiring a teaching certificate and attending the WABHMS Training School in Chicago, she secured a commission to teach at Lodge Grass in June 1920. Her annual salary was \$720 and lodging.³⁶

If letters she wrote to family members in August 1921 are any indication, Hoover gained more than she expected from her Lodge Grass experience. In a lively, good-humored style, she described a ten-day camping trip into the Bighorn Mountains she made in August with the Left Hand family and others. Driving a Ford runabout named Ophelia Bumps (two passenger seats, a cloth top, and no shock absorbers) and accompanied by another missionary, the somewhat terrified Jettie Jensen, Hoover followed a caravan of men on horses and wagonloads of women as far as the rough terrain would allow. Then, she and Jensen joined the women in the wagons until, to her great delight, they were finally allowed to ride horses. On the trip, Hoover pitched a tent for the first time in her life; plucked and prepared grouse just as she would have chicken in Illinois (to the point where she became weary of cooking the grouse hunters that

(right) Baptist influence in Crow country increased through the 1900s and 1910s. In 1907, the denomination opened a small mission in Pryor, and in 1911, a school in Wyola. Anna Petzoldt is pictured here (front, right) with (back row, from left to right) Lodge Grass teacher Maude Edwards, Wyola field matron Edna Oden, and Wyola teacher Blanche Sim. The Crow girls are Mary and Mary Ann Carpenter, but the baby in the cradleboard is not identified.

(far right) Many of the missionary teachers relished their lives among the Crows, including Effie Hoover (Orser), who began teaching in Lodge Grass in June 1920 for an annual salary of \$720 plus lodging. She is pictured here, on the left, with her friend Clara Green in Pryor.



Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.; Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, LS.95.144



Courtesy Orser Family

continually brought to her); almost lost in a stream some of the silk clothing she had brought for Sunday services; went hunting for a bear in a nearby cave (never saw it); took a bath in water so cold that it “burnt her skin”; followed Crow tradition by helping women pack and move camp; and participated in evening song fests. “How they love to sing” she commented in a letter.³⁷

After the two worship services on Sunday, Hoover observed that “the Indian men are fast learning white man ways and let the women take care of the religious duties of the family. We had church and all the women came but the men all went hunting. We did have a fine service and prayed for the absent.” The missionary plainly enjoyed the whole adventure, writing, “No one wanted to go home.” More importantly, she understood the value of the trip, concluding that “after all, that [this] way is the best way to really get to know the Indians.”³⁸

Apparently, WABHMS authorities appreciated Hoover’s work at Lodge Grass, because in April of 1922, they reassigned her to Pryor, where her earnings increased to \$840 a year and her responsibilities expanded immensely. Under a charge to “purify the lives and save the souls of those to whom you are sent,” she was expected by her sponsors to “elevate and Christianize the homes”; prepare and preach sermons; organize and teach Sunday school classes; initiate and coordinate Christian meetings, clubs, and “Industrial Schools”; and provide “instruction



Courtesy Orser Family

Hoover’s pleasure in her position is apparent in her descriptions of the camping trip in the Bighorn Mountains she took with the Left Hand family. On the trip, she drove her 1921 Ford roadster (above), which she called “Ophelia Bumps”—making reference to its lack of shock absorbers—before joining the women in wagons when the terrain became too difficult. Her adventures included hunting for bear in a cave and bathing in water so cold that it “burnt” the skin. “No one wanted to go home,” she wrote, noting the experience that incorporated Baptist worship and Crow traditions was “the best way to really get to know the Indians.”

in domestic duties.” Through it all, she was to maintain a continuous round of home visits, giving special attention to those who were in poor health.³⁹

A brief diary kept by Hoover during her time at Pryor shows that she did all of the above and in the process established significant relationships with a variety of Crow people. One of these was John Frost, a lay preacher, interpreter, and indispensable associate who later became the first Crow to be ordained as a Baptist minister, giving witness to the impact of the

Baptist authorities rewarded Hoover's work with a reassignment to the Pryor Baptist Mission (right), where her earnings increased to \$840 a year and her responsibilities expanded. Instructing her to "purify the lives and save the souls of those to whom you are sent," her sponsors expected her to "elevate and Christianize the homes"; prepare and preach sermons; organize and teach Sunday school classes; initiate and coordinate Christian meetings, clubs and "Industrial Schools"; and provide "instruction in domestic duties." Pryor congregants pictured below are, left to right: Gretchen Hawk, Hannah Wiggman, unidentified, Alex Plain Feather (behind woman holding child), Rose Hugs, unidentified, Henry Russell (smiling), John Frost (behind Russell), unidentified, and Frank Hawk (back row, right of door). Others are also unidentified.



Courtesy Orser Family



Bentley Collection, Big Horn County Historical Society, Hardin, Montana

missionary influence on his life. Frost became well-known as a powerful speaker in Crow communities and at Baptist meetings across the country. In 1927, he spoke to an audience of ten thousand Baptists at the denomination's annual convention in Chicago. After tracing the history of Baptist involvement on the Crow reservation, he concluded his speech with the words: "If I were master of many languages, I could not find words to express my gratitude for what the gospel has done for my people. I can only say, 'God bless you, God bless the work and the workers among the Crows.'"⁴⁰

As Hoover described it, her work among the Crows continued to focus on the goals of the women's missionary societies, particularly those that emphasized service to families. One key result of such

service was the strengthening of intercultural bonds among women, as a story she wrote about a Pryor woman reveals:

One of the outstanding women of the Crow tribe and one who is ever an inspiration to the women missionaries is Turns Back Plenty. She has been tested as few are. Lucy, the mother of three sons, had long prayed for a girl baby and no less anxious was her tall stalwart husband, one of the finest Indians of all the tribe. At last she did have three girls. The first two died in early babyhood, and it is of the third and last one I want to tell you. "She came in answer to prayer," said Lucy, "so I want to name her Faith." Lucy had even gone to the government hospital for the birth so the little one might

have the best start possible. As I saw the little face for the first time, I somehow felt that she would stay with us for only a short time, and I wondered how I would carry on if she was taken. Faith was not yet six months old when pneumonia came, and there was so little we could do. The snow lay deep, three feet or more. No doctor at Pryor and the roads impassible for a car. In bitterness, Lucy said, "It's because we're Indians, the doctor won't come." Lucy had obeyed every suggestion from the government nurse, kept the baby so clean and anxiously inquired every time we visited, "Don't you think she looks stronger?"

Many times I have seen Turns Back carry the baby in his arms, walking back and forth in the cabin, she so tiny and he such a giant. We watched all through several nights, and at last they, too, could see the end was near. I shall never forget the moment of her going. She looked up and smiled so beautifully, everyone in the room gasped in wonder. It seemed as if she must have looked right into heaven. What a comfort it was to Lucy and all of us.

The babe was dressed and then Lucy handed her out the window for it is considered ill luck to take a corpse out of the door, for the one who follows first will die shortly. The Indians cite instances where this really happened.

I carried her to the chapel where the funeral was held. Indians came to the house to mourn and to take furniture, dishes, etc. as custom allowed. Lucy was brave through it all. Sometimes when I came there [to Lucy's home], I found her reading from the Bible, Josh. 1:9 and from the Psalms. She comforted me for I, too, had loved little Faith.

Lucy's second great sorrow came on July 4, a day of celebration and feasting and merry-making for the Crows. Tim, her second son, was a fine boy of sixteen. Everyone liked him, the white people fully as much as the Indians. He wished to go with other Indians to a camp on the Big Horn. Lucy was afraid for him to go alone on horseback, but he promised to soon overtake the other Indians who had gone ahead. No one quite knows what happened, but the following morning, his horse came

Bentley Collection, Big Horn County Historical Society, Hardin, Montana



Hoover became close to Lucy Turns Back Plenty (left) and her family, who experienced the loss of two children in the space of a few short years.

back riderless. A search was begun and word sent to Lucy. She hitched up her team and started for the Big Horn, praying all the way, "Oh, God, if you take my boy, please give me back his body." Over and over she prayed this one prayer.

After days of searching, an old Indian woman whose medicine was "water" told them to go to a certain little island and to look for some silver sparkling in the sun. They did. His spurs shone in the sunlight, and they found him.⁴¹

Hoover's narrative is significant for a number of reasons. First is the insight she displayed in its telling. After only a few years among the Crows, she was able to discern perceptively and write clearly about the people and their culture. Additionally, there is substantial evidence of her close relationship with the Turns Back Plenty family. Finally, the story provides a compelling look at reservation life in the early twenties. The isolation, the scarcity of medical care, and Lucy's diminished self-worth are inescapable facets. So is the blending of custom and modernity. In a break with tradition, Lucy went to the hospital in hopes of having a healthy baby, but after the infant's death, the family followed long-held Crow customs. Still, funeral services were in the church, and still, family ties remained central. Finally, the death of Lucy's son discloses another kind of blending. Lucy prayed to the Christian God that his body would be found; a medicine woman used her power to tell searchers where to look.

Hoover's work at Pryor lasted four years. In 1925, she moved to San Francisco to work in a Vernon Street mission school that was linked to that city's First Chinese Baptist Church. Not far behind came John Orser, a Montanan of "cowboy background," who had courted her in Pryor. The two married in California in 1925 and lived there until 1929, when they returned to Pryor. They had three sons. After

coming back to the reservation, the young mother again became active in the Baptist church, providing valuable assistance both to John Frost, who had become its minister, and to Mary Murray, the missionary, a recent graduate of BMTS who served at Pryor from 1930 to 1939. During this decade, the church at Pryor thrived, and its members began to add activities that ranged from YMCA programs to World Wide Guides, a missions' organization for girls. Church meetings often were so well attended that extra seating had to be installed. Murray also ministered to non-Indian Protestants in the Pryor community, but worship services there were never combined. According Murray, "Rev. Mr. Frost works solely with the Indians, but as there is no other Protestant worker for the whites, I try to serve them."⁴²

Of herself, the missionary wrote: "When I was a little girl, I prayed that God would use my life in some way, and since I came to Pryor in September, I find that he has given me a big task, a responsibility so great that I must continually pray, 'Oh God, make me big enough for the work that you have given me to do.' I love my work and my people and I'm anxious that not one of them shall perish."⁴³

Crow Baptists gave Murray the name Walks in the Light. After leaving Crow country, she worked briefly among the Hopi people of Arizona and then, at the beginning of World War II, transferred to Detroit to create a "trailer park ministry" for people drawn to

that city by wartime industrial jobs. Later, she became an ordained minister and served several churches in Wisconsin.

While Baptist churches grew and changed, they also faced intense competition for students and converts from the Catholics on the Crow reservation. An excerpt from the autobiography of Agnes Yellowtail Deernose, who was born in 1908, grew up near Lodge Grass, and attended school at the Baptist mission, is revealing. Although her parents were active in traditional Tobacco Societies, they both became Christians, her father a Catholic and her mother a Baptist.⁴⁴

On a regular basis, the couple's children attended the Baptist church in Lodge Grass with their mother, but once a month they made a lengthy buggy trip "up Lodge Grass Creek" to St. Ann's Chapel for Mass. Although the priest, Father Ribaud, conducted services only once a month, the Catholics established a day school at St. Ann's, and hoping to help it grow, the priest urged Yellowtail to enroll his children there. But Yellowtail declined, claiming that the distance was too far from the family home. As a consequence, Father Ribaud said the Crow father would no longer be able to receive the sacrament of confession. And, as his daughter tells it: "That hurt my father's feelings, and he said he would not go to the Catholic church any more. I remember his saying to my mother, 'I'll start going to your church, the Baptist church. That priest hurt my feelings.' He started going to the Baptist

Bentley Collection, Big Horn County Historical Society, Hardin, Montana



John Frost, a lay preacher and interpreter, later became the first Crow to be ordained as a Baptist minister. Frost is pictured here (standing on left) and the others are, from left to right: (on horses) Bird Above and Kisses Standing, (standing) Bull Don't Fall Down and "Mr. and Mrs. Knows—" (possibly Knows the Gun).

church, and he never did go back to the Catholic Church. He had his funeral at the Baptist church.”⁴⁵

Agnes Deernose followed her parents’ Christian examples throughout her life. Petzoldt baptized Deernose when she was about twelve years old, after he had made sure that she “understood what the Church and the Christian life meant.” For young Agnes, this meant that “I went to church every Sunday, and the church came first before I did anything else, like going on a picnic.” Sunday attendance required a substantial time commitment because “we had church until noon and everybody brought a lunch and ate it there. People looked forward to eating and visiting together. About two o’clock they had another service, stopping around four o’clock. The children were all up front and we didn’t run around and play in church the way kids do now. Sometimes during the week they had a box social and games. People came from Crow Agency by train and went back on the train about three in the morning.”⁴⁶

Obviously, the church was a powerful influence on Deernose’s life, but so was another spiritual observance. In the same year as her baptism, she became a Tobacco Society initiate. She “liked the Tobacco Society” and practiced its rituals until she married Donnie Deernose, a “strong Baptist” who “didn’t want medicine bags between him and God.”⁴⁷

As for schooling, Deernose remembered both positive and negative experiences. She achieved only

a seventh-grade education, attending the Baptist school for the first four years and moving to the public school in Lodge Grass for the last three. Mrs. Petzoldt was her first teacher at the mission, “and she was good,” but then a Miss Wafford, who was “mean and cranky,” came in. Despite the fact that this teacher hit the young student across the hands with a ruler several times and once placed her “in a closet for half an hour,” Deernose and Wafford later “became friends.”⁴⁸

The Deernose narrative illuminates a number of aspects of reservation Christianity during the early twentieth century. Her account of the rather remarkable train journeys of Crow Agency people reveals the importance of the church in strengthening social bonds. Additionally, as her father’s experience indicates, individuals followed different denominations for different, often deeply personal, reasons. Plus, her own blending of Tobacco Society and Christian spirituality demonstrates that multiple religious expressions by a single individual did (and do) occur. In *The World of the Crow Indians*, Rodney Frey elaborates on this situation and offers a mid-twentieth-century example that describes how Susie Yellowtail, a stalwart in the First Crow Indian Baptist Church, “danced regularly in the Sun Dance and fully supported” her husband, Tom, who was a sun dance chief.⁴⁹

Finally, there is Deernose’s emphasis on the denominational competition, a phenomenon that became even more complex with the appearance of additional forms of religious expression. In 1910, a Crow man named Frank Bethune introduced to the reservation Peyotism, which combines Indian traditions with selected Christian ideas and relies on the use of peyote “buttons.” In 1918, as it spread to numerous tribal reservations, this belief system became incorporated as the Native American Church. An Indian Office survey reported in 1922 that this organization included thirty-four adherents among the Crows. In the following decade, despite strenuous opposition from Petzoldt and from reservation superintendent Calvin Asbury, the religion flourished. It still does, and anthropologist Omar Stewart, writing in 1983, said that it had claimed certain prominent Baptists as members. Stewart identified two of these as Bill Russell, “a deacon in a local Baptist church,” and Jim Big Lake, who told the researcher

Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.; Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, LS.95.373



Agnes Yellowtail (Deernose), pictured above in her school days, grew up near Lodge Grass, went to the Baptist Church, and attended the Baptist mission school for four years in the 1910s. Her mother was a Baptist and her father a Catholic who later began attending the Baptist Church, and both were active in the traditional Tobacco Society. Agnes also was active in the Tobacco Society until her marriage to a “strong Baptist” who “didn’t want medicine bags between him and God.”



Though there were challenges from other denominations and resistance from traditionalists, Baptist missions continued to hold an important place in the Crow religious landscape during the 1920s and beyond. In 1923, the Crow Agency Congregationalists invited the Baptists to send them a minister when church membership dwindled after founder James Burgess died. Ordained ministers Chester and Laura Bentley accepted the invitation to the Crow Agency church. Above, the church honors its namesake with a memorial service, circa 1930. Chet Bentley is in the pulpit; Pretty Shield and George Hogan are standing.

he “attended services at both Baptist and Catholic churches and that most NAC members participated in other churches for ‘educational reasons.’”⁵⁰

In the 1920s, another faith, Pentecostalism, came to exert a major influence on reservation life (which it maintains today). Pentecostal Christianity, which emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, focuses on the idea that an individual might experience a baptism from the Holy Spirit, thereby receiving significant gifts such as the ability to speak in an unknown tongue, prophesy, and/or heal others through prayer and touch. In 1924, with inspiration and encouragement from Aimee Semple McPherson, the movement’s leader, a Crow woman named Nellie Pretty Eagle Stewart began a Pentecostal ministry on the reservation. She quickly attracted a large following, in part because of the syncretic way she practiced her Christianity. She went on vision quests in the Wolf Mountains and while there received special songs for the Crows to sing in their Pentecostal meetings. She and others had dreams that affirmed the authority that McPherson had given her. Moreover, she acquired

the ability to heal by touch and prayer, acting in ways that were similar to traditional Crow healers. Stewart continued her leadership role until her death in 1937. After that, a series of non-Indian couples served as ministers on the reservation, and a number of Crow men, some of whom were descendants of Stewart, assumed positions of leadership.⁵¹

New Definitions of Service

Despite the challenges from other denominations and strong resistance from traditionalists who asserted that Petzoldt was forcing Crows to abandon their spiritual roots, Baptist missions continued to maintain an important place in the Crow religious landscape in the 1920s and the decade that followed.⁵² As the number of converts grew, Crow people increasingly assumed leadership roles in church affairs. Evidence of this appears in the development of Burgess Memorial Baptist Church at Crow Agency, where Congregationalist James Burgess had established a mission in the late nineteenth century. After his death, the



Much like earlier Baptist missionaries, Chet Bentley expanded the definition of ministerial service to include more than church administration and preaching. He visited homes on a regular basis, organized social events, and fostered worship that crossed racial and cultural boundaries. Here, the congregation watches as Bentley walks with a church member into the Little Bighorn River for baptism in 1924.

church foundered (membership had declined to ten) until a small group of Crows urged the Baptists to replace the Congregationalists and send them a minister. This occurred in 1923, at which time the Crows received not one minister but two.

When Laura Paine and Chester “Chet” Bentley married in September 1922, she was the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Marshfield, Massachusetts, one of only two women to be ordained as Baptist ministers in that state. Bentley was serving the First Community Baptist Church in the Big Muddy Oil Fields of Parkerton, Wyoming, where the couple planned to live and work as pastoral partners. Their plans changed rather quickly, however. In the spring of 1923, they accepted a transfer to the new Baptist mission at Crow Agency (an assignment in which church fathers deliberately disregarded Laura’s ministerial credentials). In a strongly patriarchal message, American Baptist officials expressed gratitude for “all

the assistance she can and will give” but declared, “We expect her to be first a wife and mother and then an assistant in the work.” Naturally, there would be no compensation for the anticipated “assistance.”⁵³ Nonetheless, assist Laura did: for thirty-six years, the Bentleys at Crow Agency served both the congregation, which had named itself Burgess Memorial in honor of its original pastor, and the surrounding community. Defining service on their own terms, these Baptists combined their distinctly different personalities to bring new vitality and an attitude of inclusiveness to the Crows and their neighbors.

The work of the Bentleys and others who came to the reservation in the 1920s led to changes that affected intercultural dynamics, gendered interactions, and evangelical aspirations. For example, Chet Bentley expanded his definition of ministerial service to include much more than church administration and preaching. He built relationships by visiting homes

on a regular basis, organizing myriad social events that welcomed everyone, encouraging Crow men and women to take on greater congregational responsibilities, and fostering worship that crossed racial and cultural boundaries. In 1943, after two decades on the reservation, he was able to report an “active” church membership of 182. This included ninety-six Crow people and eighty-six non-Indians, sixteen of whom were Japanese Americans (an extraordinary situation considering the historical moment). Chet and a group from the nearby town of Hardin made a “supervision” arrangement with federal officials so that none of the Japanese who ranched and farmed in Crow country would be removed to wartime internment camps.⁵⁴

Laura Bentley was more reserved than her husband, but her kindness as a counselor and good listener appealed to many people, particularly women and children. In her autobiography, *Grandmother’s Grandchild, My Crow Indian Life*, Alma Snell, granddaughter of the noted medicine woman Pretty Shield, wrote: “I sort of took Mrs. Bentley as a mother. Mrs. Bentley was everybody’s mother, even though there were other mothers around. She was so patient. She was so patient with everyone. She laughed a lot. She didn’t have a jolly countenance; she had a very serious look about her, but she laughed a lot at what the kids did. She knew we were learning.”⁵⁵

Alma Snell was not quite two years old when her own mother died and the aged Pretty Shield took over the task of rearing her. They lived in a “tar paper shack” near the church, which became her second home. Alma played on the swings in the churchyard, became friends with the Bentley children (there would be four—three girls and a boy), enjoyed jam sandwiches their mother made, attended Sunday school, square-danced in the church hall, participated in pageants, and sang in the choir. And in a time of terrible trouble, she found safety and comfort in her relationships with the ministers. At the age of nineteen, she became pregnant when a Crow man raped her. Her grandmother had recently died, and her older sisters were offering confused advice about either abortion or marriage (which the rapist, who had escaped prosecution, was urging). In faith and desperation, Snell turned to Laura Bentley for help. After conversations, prayers, tears, and more prayers, the missionary advised the bewildered young woman to have the baby but have nothing to do with the father. This is exactly what Snell did.⁵⁶

Across time, Laura Bentley connected with Crow women in a variety of ways. Together they formed groups that would today be called support networks. In terms of faith, there was the Philathea Sunday school class, and in terms of community, there was the



Bentley Collection, Big Horn County Historical Society, Hardin, Montana

Though Laura Bentley was more reserved than her husband, her kindness as a counselor and good listener appealed to everyone, but especially the women and children. Characterized as “everybody’s mother,” she participated in community life as well as religious services. In this photograph, she poses (front row, in white dress) with the church sewing club.



George Hogan, Frank and Julia Shane, Florence Real Bird, and Max Big Man assumed leadership roles in Burgess Memorial Baptist Church at Crow Agency. Big Man wrote scripts and designed scenery for church productions. In this 1932 Crow history pageant, he is seated on the left. The others are (from left to right) John Deernose, Charlie Yarlott, unidentified, Dorothy Shane, Chester Bentley (standing with Bible), Julia Shane, Kitty Deernose, Cordelia Big Man, and Myrtle Big Man.

sewing circle, which made layettes as gifts for newborn babies and quilts that were sold to raise funds for the church. In a strong sense, gatherings such as these, laced as they were with comfortable informal talk, reinvigorated old habits of togetherness that had been a major part of women's lives during the buffalo days.

Another example of this sense of togetherness and of the increasing leadership roles of Crow men and women appears in a 1926 letter from Kitty Deernose, who served as a deaconess, a Sunday school teacher, and a kind of corresponding secretary at Burgess Memorial. Writing to the Bentleys, who were visiting their families in New England, she began: "Dear Folks, as you call us. I suppose it is alright. We received that welcome and kind letter last night and was sure glad to hear from you very much." News of church services follows. Thirty-five attended on Sunday, but the collection was only nineteen cents. The previous Sunday, services had been held at Black

Lodge (a small chapel north of Crow Agency) with forty-seven present, but "we forgot to take up a collection." Then, there is some information on people who are not well, and in the midst of this: "Tell your father he is welcome indeed for the moccasins. I feel as though I did not do enough for your people to pay them for what they have done for us Crows by giving up their son to come over and work amongst us. It is lonesome here with out you."

And as a conclusion: "We hope to see you pretty quick. Your folks at home, Mr. and Mrs. Deernose and son."⁵⁷ Others who assumed leadership roles at Burgess Memorial included Snell's father, George Hogan, a Carlisle Indian School graduate; Frank and Julia Shane; Florence Real Bird; and Max Big Man, who wrote scripts and designed scenery for church pageants in which he often took a leading role.

More opportunities for leadership emerged in connection with the annual camp meetings of the Crow Indian Baptist Association. Formed in 1921



The annual camp meetings of the Crow Indian Baptist Association, formed in 1921 to advance “civic and religious interests of the Crow Indian Reservation,” blended customs from the buffalo days with a daily schedule of sunrise prayer meetings, Bible studies, song fests, testimonies, and sermons. As a child, Alma Snell camped with her grandmother Pretty Shield. She enjoyed early-morning cooking fires and remembered Chet Bentley going “from door to door with fry bread in his hand, eating it.”



Crow Indian Baptist Association meeting, 1924. Women participants pictured (above left) are left to right: (women sitting) Nellie Stewart, Kate Stewart, Julia Shane, Laura Bentley; (babies) Martha White Clay, Alvin Stewart, Grace Shane, Marie Bentley; (standing) Tillie Eagle, Kitty Deernose, Mayme Stewart, Margaret Shane (with unidentified child), Lena Yarlott. Men participants (above right): most are unidentified, except (standing, first row, far right, in white shirt) George Hogan, (second row, far left) Chet Bentley, (far right) Frank Shane.

with the stated purpose of “advancing civic and religious interests of the Crow Indian Reservation,” the Association united all of the Crow Baptist churches from Wyola to Pryor. Membership was open to all Crow people, Baptist clergy, and their families. The governing body was a five-member board of directors, usually four Crow people and one missionary, elected on an annual rotating basis for three-year terms. The board appointed appropriate committees and relied on parliamentary procedure in conducting its meetings.⁵⁸

Camp meetings usually lasted four days and consisted of an outdoor gathering in some designated, often secluded, spot on the reservation. People erected tents, built campfires, and enjoyed visiting, as in the buffalo days. Each day began with a sunrise prayer meeting, and a schedule of Bible studies, song fests, testimonies, and sermons followed. Crow men and women led most of the services and managed all preparations. A sampling of programs demonstrates Crow people’s involvement in redefining Christian service over time. The pamphlet for the 1924 meeting, which states its “object” as “First, Religious, Second, Educational, Third, Social,” lists eight committees—Tents, Ushering, Camp Ground, Feast, Recreation, Entertainment, Camp Police, and Music. A total of forty-five people served on committees, which included representatives from all the reservation districts. At the bottom of the program’s final page are these straightforward instructions: “No automobiles permitted near assembly tent. Plan to attend services on time. Keep kamp klean.”⁵⁹

Each year, planners created themes. A few of these include “The Crow Indians in a Changing World” (1932, with moderator George Hogan); “Together with God” (1934, no moderator named but 450 in attendance); “The World Fellowship of Christ” (1939, moderator Donald Deernose); “The Things Impossible with Men Are Possible with God” (1943, moderator Max Big Man); “The Whole Gospel for the Whole World” (1946, moderator John White Man Runs Him); and “Christianity for the Crow People” (1953, moderator Kenneth Yellowtail).⁶⁰

Alma Snell recalled that as a child she camped with Pretty Shield, who “usually stayed close to her tent, but attended services.” Snell enjoyed early-morning cooking fires and remembers Chet Bentley walking about with fry bread in his hand: “Somebody

had been fixing fry bread, so he picked it up and went from door to door with fry bread in his hand, eating it. Mrs. Bentley stayed where her camp was. I made a poem about him and her—her patience and him with a piece of fry bread in his hand.”⁶¹

Other memories included games, races, berry picking, and “singing, lots of singing.” After evening services, people gathered around campfires and told stories. Said Deernose: “I remember one time around a campfire, a missionary asked the children, ‘Now what do you think the Lord Jesus would do if he was twelve years old and here with you?’ One of the kids answered, ‘Oh, I bet he would dance.’”⁶²

We do not know if the missionaries danced, but we do see them engaged in meaningful interactions with Crow people. We do not know who first thought of encouraging Christianity and community by camping as in the buffalo days, but the fact that the Association decided to do so and that the missionaries were a part of the plan is a strong indicator of mutual interests and acceptance.

Mutual acceptance was a crucial feature of Crow-missionary relationships; those Baptists who served the reservation most effectively engendered trust by accepting the fact that Crow people wanted to maintain a kind of cultural integrity. Two women workers at Lodge Grass personified this attitude. They are Clara Olds, who arrived in 1926, after working with immigrants at Davenport House of New Haven, Connecticut, and Malvina Johnson, who came in 1930. Both women were graduates of the Baptist Training School, and Johnson had a bachelor’s degree from Macalester College in Minnesota. The two remained on the Crow reservation, eventually serving both Lodge Grass and Wyola until 1955.⁶³

During their years of service, Olds and Johnson consistently displayed a kind of cultural sensitivity that Crow people appreciated. According to Minnie Ellen Fitzler, whose grandfather was a member of the council that invited the Baptists, they “never said anything about us giving up our tribal ways, but they never participated.” Fitzler, who served for years as church organist, recalled that Clara Olds was a “taskmaster, but for some reason we all loved her.” On the other hand, Malvina Johnson, who taught her to play the piano and encouraged her musical talents, was “more gentle and affectionate.” Almost forty years after the missionary’s death, Fitzler still felt moved

to say, “I can’t believe my world doesn’t have Miss Johnson in it.” Jewell Medicine Horse Williams, the granddaughter of an early convert named Mary One Goose, had similar memories, saying, “Miss Johnson and Miss Olds accepted us, and we accepted them.”⁶⁴

Clearly, these two missionaries adhered to a conviction Olds once expressed: “The most important business of being a missionary is being a friend.”⁶⁵ Opportunities for friendship increased during the

Olds-Johnson years at Lodge Grass. A new church complex, dedicated in 1928, included a chapel, guest rooms, a small museum for exhibiting Crow arts, an apartment for women missionaries, and a “Christian Life Center,” or church hall, which the Crow people named the “Red Flower Room.” Significantly, doors to the Red Flower Room and to the missionaries’ home, which they called “the house by the side of the road,” were always open. Elders dropped in for



(above) The community gathered in 1973 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Burgess Memorial Baptist Church. Most of the people are not identified, but Chet Bentley is standing in back next to the window and seated in the foreground is George Hogan (with white hair).

The church served as the community center for Crow Agency. Church-sponsored activities ranged from volleyball (left, 1946) to Easter feasts.

Both photos, Bentley Collection, Big Horn County Historical Society, Hardin, Montana

coffee and conversation; youngsters came after school and in the evenings to enjoy games, popcorn, and reading *National Geographic*. A 4-H club, a World Wide Guides group for girls, and a Boys' Club began. Adults organized an annual "Young Married People's Banquet" with dinner by candlelight, and an "Old People's Feast" honored elders each year. The winter of 1934–35 was the coldest in Montana's history, but even when the temperature dropped to twenty degrees below zero, the sewing club met. Mrs. White Hip walked a mile through the snow to serve lunch to the group. The temperature dropped to thirty-five below one Sunday, but forty members made it to services.⁶⁶ The faithfulness of these attendees serves as a reminder that although the church met numerous community needs, the spiritual teachings of Christianity remained its most important focus. Olds and Johnson knew this, but they also recognized the value of teaching by example. The 1955 merger of the Women's Baptist Home Mission Society with the larger American Baptist Home Mission Society ended support for their mission at Lodge Grass, and they received assignments elsewhere, but after retirement, they spent the rest of their lives in Billings, nurturing their friendships with Crow people.



Friendship, its meaning and effects, is a central theme of this study. Only marginally does it consider institutions. Although Baptist and Indian Office policies formed a framework for the lives described here, people—missionaries and Crows—were at the heart of change. As they interacted, sometimes in cooperation, sometimes in conflict, they created new individual *and* cultural identities. To think that this process involved all of the Crow people would be a mistake. Some followed other Christian paths, becoming Catholics or Pentecostals, while others turned to the Native American Church or remained traditionalists. Many blended their spiritual beliefs and practices in ways that satisfied their individual needs. But for those who joined Baptist congregations, Christianity came to mean a new faith, new opportunities for leadership and self-expression, and through the creation of new kinds of communities, a way to ease transitions to reservation life.

It would also be erroneous to assume that cultural imperialism never impinged on reservation relation-



Easter celebrants Marie Bentley and Dorothy Shane in their Easter dresses, carrying Easter baskets.

Bentley Collection,
Big Horn County Historical Society, Hardin, Montana

ships. The Baptists' initial requirement that a church be included in their program provides an example and so does their school's curriculum that emphasized the assimilationist ideology which connected Christianity and "civilization." The traditionalists' distrust of Petzoldt and the school experiences of Agnes Deernose serve as additional reminders of cultural antipathy. But as Chet Bentley acknowledged in a speech he titled "My Friend the Crow Indian," such tensions are an inescapable feature of intercultural encounters. In his words:

The first Indian I ever saw stood in front of a cigar store in Boston, Mass. There he stood, right foot extended, a gee string about his middle, a knife in his right hand. Three words came to mind: knife, scalp, savage. To give a youngster the impression that this fierce looking warrior looking down at him is a true representation of an Indian is a lot of bunk and not a compliment to Indian people.⁶⁷

Noticeably, some Baptists handled "bunk" better than others.

In a study of women missionaries in international settings, historian Barbara Welter states: "The historian of the religious experience must always consider that, however much religion was involved in the working out of social, political and economic necessities, it was also a matter of individual will and conscience. For the nineteenth-century American on the foreign mission field, her life had meaning and joy and was



Baptist women missionaries who went to the Crow reservation demonstrated their ability to become part of the Crow community as well as to teach the religion. The Crows, for their part, adopted and blended Baptist ideology with traditional beliefs as it made sense in their individual lives. At left, missionary Hannah Wiggman shares a blanket and a laugh with Lucy Turns Back Plenty.

Initially, they had arrived as apostles of assimilation and domesticity, planning to minister specifically to women and children, but their vision and range of service changed.

As they shared their lives with Crow people, they began to include Crow men in their outreach, and they came to collaborate extensively with male ministers. Thus, their lives reveal how new understandings of gender emerged. Additionally, their experiences highlight both the promises and pitfalls of intercultural dynamics. Significantly, Crow men and women came to define their interactions with Baptists on their own terms, to meet their own needs. The Baptist influence continues on the reservation today with churches at Lodge Grass, Crow Agency, and Wyola.

The words of an elder named Likes The Water are instructive. Speaking at a Christmas service in 1932, he said:

infused by a sense of privilege at being the special recipient of God's grace."⁶⁸

Lucy Hicks, Sarah Goodspeed, Blanche Sim, Frances Shaw, Effie Hoover, Mary Murray, Clara Olds, Malvina Johnson, Anna Petzoldt, and Laura Bentley almost certainly would agree with Welter's analysis. They, along with other "highway and hedge workers" and the women who supported them, did indeed find "meaning and joy" in their lives.⁶⁹

The statement from Joanna Moore quoted at the beginning of this article underscores Baptist women's sense of a calling and acceptance of responsibilities. Moore's declaration that missionary women "have never learned how to stand on a pedestal and hand out the Gospel at the end of a forty-foot pole" certainly has resonance for the Baptist women who served on the Crow reservation for more than half a century. Those who stayed for extended periods of time came to create identities as independent professionals committed to building relationships with Crow people.

As a boy we had no Christmas. With my parents I lived in a tipi. There were few houses, no fences, and my father hunted buffalo in this valley. Now all is changed. The old days are gone, never to return. The white man came in with his houses, cattle, sheep, and farm machinery. Our good young men went the white man's way and often it was not good. Then the missionaries came with the Black Book and told us the Christmas story. It was good. It tells us to love one another and not to hate. We do not understand it all, but we are happy in our hearts to know about the Great Father Above and of His love for all people.⁷⁰

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Notes

1. Joanna P. Moore, *In Christ's Stead: "Autobiographical Sketches"* (Chicago, 1902), 140. Moore, whose first career was as a schoolteacher, explains how in 1863, she felt "called" to work among the freedmen on Island No. 10 near Memphis. She devoted the rest of her life to mission service to African Americans in several southern states. Until 1877, when the Women's Home Mission Society was formed, Baptist churches in and near her home in Belvedere, Illinois, supported her.

2. Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, Conn., 1990), 1, 3–5, 12–16. Nancy Cott's *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, Conn., 1997), pp. xv–xviii, provides a cogent discussion of the "discourse of domesticity," echoes of which appear in Joanna Moore's comments on the duties of female missionaries.

3. Peggy Pasco, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York, 1990). Pasco makes this ironical point throughout her study, but a particularly instructive portion is chapter 3, aptly titled "Some Women's Culture and Other Women's Needs: Motivations, Maternalism, and the Language of Gratitude." The links among Christianity, domesticity, and civilization permeate the reform literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

4. Bertha Grinnell Judd, *Fifty Golden Years: The First Half Century of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1927), 4–6. Dorothy Bucklin in *Strong Hearts for God* (Philadelphia, 1955), a history of Baptist missionary work among Indian peoples, identifies Tuscaroras, Cherokees, Ottawas, Pottawatomies, Miamis, Creeks, Oneidas, and Choctaws as recipients of Baptist evangelism before the Civil War.

5. Women's Home Mission Society of Chicago, "Report of the Executive Board, 1878," quoted in Eleanor Hull, *Women Who Carried the Good News: The History of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society* (Valley Forge, Penn., 1975), 59.

6. Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society Minutes, 1877, quoted in *ibid.*, 60. The two women's societies merged in 1909, adopted the name Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, and established headquarters in Chicago. In 1910, the year after the merger of the two regional groups, the Society's budget was \$121,309. These funds supported 309 field workers and

the American Baptist Training School.

7. Mary L. Mild, "From Ocean to Ocean," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 16 (1995), 312.

8. Charles L. White, *A Century of Faith, Centenary Edition* (Philadelphia, 1932), 9. The use of the word "fraternity" is telling. Although the American Baptist Home Mission Society originally defined its field as "the West," it extended its work to include former slaves, immigrants, and isolated mining and lumbering communities. As it grew, it established schools for its clients and seminaries to educate ministers.

9. American Baptist Home Mission Society Minutes, Apr. 14, 1879, box 59, group 4, American Baptist Historical Society Archives, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter ABHS Archives). Union did occur in 1955. Shortly afterward, Baptist historian G. Pitts Beers wrote that the merger issue had "agitated the denomination for half a century." Mild suggests that women resisted consolidation because they recognized their "unique contribution" to home missions and wanted to avoid becoming an ABHMS auxiliary. Mild, "Ocean to Ocean," 320.

10. Faith Coxe Bailey, *Two Directions: The History of the Baptist Missionary Training School* (Rochester, N.Y., 1964), 5, 7–8. See also Judd, *Fifty Golden Years*, 125.

11. Judd, *Fifty Golden Years*, 130.

12. Bailey, *Two Directions*, 11–12.

13. *Ibid.*, 13.

14. *Ibid.*, 28–30. At the end of the nineteenth century, Baptists identified certain specified areas as home mission fields. Among the school's graduates were Katherine Ellet, who, after graduating in 1882, went to Tahlequah, Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) to teach descendants of Indian people who had been removed from the Southeast in the 1830s; Ida Schofield, class of 1883, who received an appointment to the Hopis of Arizona; and Isabel Crawford, '93, who made a name for herself among the Kiowa people. On Isabel Crawford, see her autobiography, *Kiowa: A Woman Missionary in Indian Country*, introduction by Clyde Ellis (Lincoln, Nebr., 1998).

15. Bailey, *Two Directions*, 13.

16. E. E. Chivers, "Among the Crow Indians," *Home Mission Monthly* (1909), 281–82. Chivers erred in identifying Medicine Crow as "chief of the tribe." The Crows had band chiefs but never had an overall tribal chief. See Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1984); and David W. Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience* (Lawrence, Kans., 1995), for



Chet Bentley baptizing an unidentified woman, Crow reservation, circa 1920s

extensive analyses of assimilationist policies and practices. On federal boarding schools, see Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln, Nebr., 2006); and Margaret Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928*, 3rd ed. (Albuquerque, N.M., 1999).

17. Chivers, "Among the Crow Indians," 282. The fact that Chivers places the phrase "games and dances" in quotation marks creates an interesting question about language used in the meeting. Was Chivers quoting Crow negotiators directly, or did he add that particular punctuation for another reason? An answer would be speculative, but it is certain that numerous Indian Office documents reveal that the continuation of dances and other traditions was a major point of contention on the reservation during this period. For discussions of this issue, see Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805–1935* (New York, 1995), 206–21; and Peter Nabokov, "Cultivating Themselves: The Inter-play of Crow Indian Religion and History" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1988), 370–85.

18. Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 201–4, provides a summary of early evangelism among the Crows. For details on Catholic missions to the Crows, see Michael E. Engh, S.J., "Peter Paul Prando, S.J., 'Apostle of the Crows,'" *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 36 (Autumn 1984), 24–31; Wilford Schoenberg, S.J., "Among the Crow Indians, St. Xavier Mission, 1887–1960," in *Jesuits in Montana 1840–1960* (Portland, Oreg., 1972), 71–90; and Karen Watembach, "A Medieval Model of Church: A History of the Catholic Church among the Crow People, 1880–1921" (master's thesis,

Montana State University, 1985). On the Unitarians, see Margery Pease, *A Worthy Work in a Needy Time: The Montana Industrial School for Indians, 1886–1897* (Crow Agency, Mont., 1986). For more generalized studies of American Indian people and Christianity, see Joel Martin and Mark A. Nicholas, eds., *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2010); and Clyde Milner and Floyd O'Neill, eds., *Churchmen and the Western Indians, 1820–1920* (Norman, Okla., 1985).

19. It is noteworthy that community engagement was an unexpected consequence of the Crow invitation to the Baptists and the Baptist acceptance of it. For more on Crow strategies for adapting to reservation life, see Hoxie, *Parading through History*; Nabokov, “Cultivating Themselves”; and Joseph Medicine Crow, “The Effects of European Culture Contacts upon the Economic, Social, and Religious Life of the Crow Indians” (master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1939). The man named Medicine Crow who was involved in the 1903 Baptist negotiations is tribal historian Joe Medicine Crow’s grandfather.

20. Coe Hayne, “Crow Teepee and Temple, the Story of the Crow Indian and the Gospel,” *Missions* (1928), 136. In 1915, *Missions* became the new title of the ABHMS magazine. For information on the field matron program, see Helen Bannon, “True Womanhood on the Reservation: Field Matrons and the United States Indian Service,” Southwest Institute for Research on Women Working Paper No. 18 (Albuquerque, N.M., 1984).

21. Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 171–73. This monograph, Nabokov’s dissertation, and the Joe Medicine Crow thesis are excellent sources for Crow history.

22. Chivers, “Among the Crow Indians,” 282. The Office of Indian Affairs collected such statistics annually. By 1910, the reservation population had

dropped to 1,740, with the number of adults at 1,151. Of these, it was reported that 754 spoke only in Crow while 382 were bilingual. Obviously, a shift toward assimilation was occurring. Also obvious is the continued effect of disease on the Crow people. Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 171–73.

23. H. B. Grose, “The Progress of White Arm,” *Home Mission Monthly* (1904), 52–53; Hayne, “Crow Teepee and Temple,” 139.

24. W. A. Petzoldt to E. E. Chivers, Jan. 8, 1904, quoted in *Home Mission Monthly* (1904), 59.

25. Hayne, “Crow Teepee and Temple,” 136.

26. E. E. Chivers, “Red Letter Days at the Crow Indian Mission,” *Home Mission Monthly* (1904), 412.

27. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Course of Study for the Indian Schools of the United States, Industrial and Literary* (Washington, D.C., 1901).

28. Janette Woodruff, *Indian Oasis* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1939), 97.

29. *Ibid.*, 102.

30. L. G. Clark, “The Crow Indian Mission,” *Home Mission Monthly* (1906), 363; Lucy K. Hicks, “Crow Indian Mission,” WABHMS “Twenty-Eighth Annual Report” (1906), pp. 101–2, 107, box 59, group 4, ABHS Archives, Atlanta.

31. Anna F. Petzoldt to “My Dear Sister in Christ,” Oct. 26, 1908, published as a pamphlet, “The Crow Indian Mission, What a Missionary’s Wife Does,” n.d., box 60, group 4, ABHS Archives, Atlanta. A note introducing the pamphlet points out that the letter was not intended for publication.

32. Lucy K. Hicks, WABHMS “Twenty-Ninth Annual Report” (1907), pp. 105–6, box 59, group 4, ABHS Archives, Atlanta. Hicks was the niece of George Hicks, a Cherokee who had been ordained as a Baptist minister and served as a missionary to the Apache/Kiowa-Comanche Reservation in Oklahoma. She lived there

with her uncle’s family for a time. Baptist sources reveal nothing about when she left Lodge Grass or where she went. There is, however, one more fragment of evidence from Hicks. In 1906, she wrote a letter to ABHMS treasurer Charles W. Perkins and enclosed five dollars as a “Christmas Pledge.” She listed as contributors Moccasin Top, Jack Covers Up, Ed Talking Pipe, Mrs. Old Crow, Annette Blain, Gleen [perhaps Green] Bird, and Irene Wrinkle Face. This letter appeared in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (Nov. 1907), 448.

33. Sarah Goodspeed, “Among the Crows,” *From Ocean to Ocean* (1912), 180–81. The Crow view of reservation distances appears in Joseph Medicine Crow, “Eighty Years along the Jesus Road,” a pamphlet published for the eightieth anniversary of Lodge Grass Church, 1983, copy in the Joseph Medicine Crow Papers, Little Big Horn College Archives, Crow Agency, Montana. Medicine Crow has been an active member of the Baptist Church in Lodge Grass for most of his life.

34. Medicine Crow, “Eighty Years”; Blanche Sim, “Messages from Teachers and Matrons,” *From Ocean to Ocean* (1912), 11; Sim, “Wyola,” *From Ocean to Ocean* (1913), 10.

35. Frances Shaw, “Christmas with the Crow Indians,” *Missions* (1916), 896.

36. Board of Managers of the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society, “Commission,” June 1920, Orser Papers, Big Horn County Historical Society Museum, Hardin, Montana (hereafter Orser Papers).

37. Effie Hoover to Bryce and Faith, n.d., Orser Papers.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Board of Managers of the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society, “Commission,” Apr. 1, 1922, Orser Papers.

40. Coe Hayne, *Red Men on the Big Horn* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 99.

41. Effie Hoover, untitled essays, handwritten manuscript, n.d., Orser Papers.

42. Edmund Orser, “Life Portrait of Effie Hazel Hoover Orser,” undated typescript, Orser Papers; Mary Murray, “Crow Indian Mission,” *From Ocean to Ocean*, (1930), 138–39. Edmund Orser is the son of Effie and John Orser. He was still a boy when his mother died of cancer in 1941.

43. Mary Murray, “Crow Indian Mission,” *From Ocean to Ocean*, (1930), 138–39.

44. Nabokov, “Cultivating Themselves,” provides an insightful analysis of the significance of the Tobacco Society in Crow life.

45. Fred Voget, Mary K. Mee, and

Bentley Collection, Big Horn County Historical Society, Hardin, Montana



Boys showing off their riding skills, Pryor Baptist school, circa 1920s

Agnes Deernose, *They Call Me Agnes: A Crow Narrative Based on the Life of Agnes Yellowtail Deernose* (Norman, Okla., 1995), 109–111. Deernose and Voget, 111; Minnie Ellen Fitzler, interview by the author, tape recording, Lodge Grass, Montana, Aug. 3, 2000. There is some criticism on the reservation of Petzoldt's attitude about the materials that represented Crow ceremonial behavior. One man who did not want to be identified said that Petzoldt told the traditional Crows to give him their medicine bundles, shields, and sacred regalia, and then he sold them to museums. In an informal discussion at Crow Fair in August 1990, the late Marie Bull Chief Reed told me that Petzoldt forced people to dispose of ceremonial regalia in streams and then collected it to be sold to museums. Another anonymous informant who married into a Crow family but has no Indian ancestry said that the Petzoldt family collected and kept such regalia. The only "public" comment on the matter is found in Tom Yellowtail's book, which blames the missionaries for creating dissension between "church Indians" and those who held traditional views and for causing the Crows to "lose not only the medicines, but also their reminder of constant prayer and a sacred way of life." Yellowtail's wife, Susie, was a committed member of the Lodge Grass church, and he joined her in church activities. She in turn supported the traditional path he took. Their home and lives exemplified Crow syncretism. See Tom Yellowtail and Michael O. Fitzgerald, *Yellowtail, Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief: An Autobiography* (Norman, Okla., 1991), 25–26.

46. Voget, Mee, and Deernose, *They Call Me Agnes*, 113; Clara Olds, "Crow Indian Baptist Mission," *From Ocean to Ocean* (1936), 92–93

47. Olds, "Crow Indian Baptist Mission," 114.

48. *Ibid.*, 94, 96. In his autobiography, Joe Medicine Crow, who attended the Lodge Grass mission school for three years until transferring to the public school at Lodge Grass, relates memories similar to those of his cousin Agnes—a harsh teacher replaced by a kinder one. For his educational experiences in both the mission and public schools, see Joseph Medicine Crow and Herman Viola, *Counting Coup: Becoming a Crow Chief of the Reservation and Beyond* (Washington, D.C., 2006), 45–47, 67–74. The Baptist Day School closed in 1922 because the Office of Indian Affairs began to pay the State of Montana to allow Crow students to attend a newly constructed public school in the Lodge Grass community. By this time, about half of the

population of the town and its environs was Euro-American. The rationale for the change in Crow education was that children would benefit by interacting with English-speaking students. The Baptists agreed with the premise and closed the mission school. They continued, however, to serve the spiritual and social needs of Crow people at Lodge Grass, and they maintained schools in more isolated communities until the mid-1930s.

49. Rodney Frey, *The World of the Crow Indians: As Driftwood Lodges* (Norman, Okla., 1987), 157–59. Oral traditions suggest that Tom Yellowtail reciprocated his wife's support by accepting and occasionally participating in her Baptist activities. See Yellowtail and Fitzgerald, *Yellowtail*.

50. Omar Stewart, "Peyotism in Montana," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 33 (Spring 1983), 5, 7, 11. See also Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 219–22.

51. My source for this information is Timothy McCleary, "Akbaatashee: The Oilers Pentecostalism among the Crow Indians" (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1985), which analyzes the emergence of Pentecostalism on the Crow Reservation. McCleary argues persuasively that Superintendent Calvin Asbury's rigid restrictions on Crow cultural expressions in the decade of the twenties coupled with a redistribution of land that led to fragmentation of family and clan connections contributed to the growth of the Pentecostal movement.

52. A statistical summary dated 1924, located in the Bentley papers, provides an accounting of the Baptist presence. Membership at Lodge Grass was seventy-four; at Wyola, twenty-eight; Pryor, sixty-eight; Big Horn, sixty; Reno (which soon became identified as Crow Agency), twenty-five; and Black Lodge, twelve.

53. Bruce Kinney to Chester A. Bentley, Apr. 5, 1923, Bentley Papers, Big Horn County Historical Society Museum, Hardin, Montana (hereafter Bentley Papers).

54. C. A. Bentley, untitled typescript, Jan. 1943, Bentley Papers.

55. Alma Snell, *Grandmother's Grandchild, My Crow Indian Life*, ed. Becky Matthews (Lincoln, Neb., 2000), 83–84.

56. *Ibid.*, 137

57. Mr. and Mrs. Deernose and son to Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Bentley, July 31, 1926, Bentley Papers. Kitty's husband, John, was also active in church affairs. In fact, Chet Bentley described him as a "veritable John the Baptist." The Deernose son mentioned was Donnie, who eventually married Agnes Yellowtail. See C. A. Bentley, undated typescript, Bentley Papers.

58. "By-Laws of Crow Indian Baptist Association, Inc.," n.d., Bentley Papers.

59. Crow Indian Baptist Association



The note on the lantern slide reproduced above says, "Line of teams to Wolf Mts. to get logs for Crow Ind. Mission. No roads as such—just trails." It was taken in the winter of 1903–04.

programs, 1924–1976 (numerous gaps in years), Bentley Papers.

60. *Ibid.* The 1934 information is from Chester A. Bentley, "Bell Ringer Replaces the Camp Crier," *Missions* (1934), 18–20. The title refers to a change in calling people to worship. At this association for the first time, a bell was rung instead of having a crier go through the camp announcing events as in the buffalo days.

61. Snell, *Grandmother's Grandchild*, 88.

62. *Ibid.*, 89.

63. Clara Olds Biographical File, ABHS Archives; Malvina Johnson, Biographical File, *ibid.*

64. Fitzler interview; Jewel Medicine Horse Williams, interview by the author, tape recording, Crow Agency, Montana, Aug. 9, 2000.

65. Clara Olds, "Crow Indian Baptist Mission," *From Ocean to Ocean* (1936), 92–93.

66. Various articles by Clara Olds in *From Ocean to Ocean* (1931), 134–36; (1933), 93; (1935), 152–53.

67. Chester Bentley speech to Billings Lions Club, Apr. 1967, Bentley Papers.

68. Barbara Welter, "She Hath Done What She Could, Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth Century America," in *Women in American Religion*, ed. Janet James and Paul S. Boyer (Philadelphia, 1980), 102.

69. "Women Missionaries 1904–1956," a handwritten list in the ABHS Archives, identifies thirty-one WABHMS appointees to the Crow reservation. This, however, is an approximation because the question of "others?" appears at the end of the column of names. The compiler of the list is not named.

70. Chester Bentley, "Christmas Where General Custer Fought His Last Fight," *Missions* (Dec. 1934), 519–22.

Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A.; Dr. William and Anna Petzoldt Collection, Gift of Genevieve Petzoldt Fitzgerald, LS.95.109